

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

APRIL 28, 2009

DCFS Report on Child Fatalities

In the past few weeks, much public discussion has taken place concerning the tragic deaths of children who are under the care and responsibility of the Department of Children and Family Services ("DCFS"). Many of these deaths occurred in the Second Supervisorial District. These discussions should be encouraged among all stakeholders in order for the Board of Supervisors to examine and review best practices and develop policies which will not only protect the children, but also assist them to thrive and lead productive and happy lives.

In order for the Board of Supervisors to craft sound and effective policy, data and information must be collected, organized, and analyzed in order to make informed decisions. The collection of data will also allow for the establishment of baselines which will aid in the development of measurements for performance and success, which is essential if we are to hold ourselves and all County employees accountable to the children under our care.

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MOLINA _____

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This data and information should be shared, when appropriate and with respect for confidentiality of sensitive and protected information, with the paramount concern for the protection of the health and safety of children in our care. It is our understanding that a report from the Chief Executive Officer on this subject is forthcoming, and this report and its recommendations, along with the anticipated hiring of the lead attorney in the Children's Special Investigations Unit, will be a large step forward in protecting those under our care. However, additional steps can be taken which will make us better equipped to serve and protect these children.

THEREFORE, I MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS;

Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services and the Chief Probation Officer, to report back within 30 days, on the following issues:

1. Training and education requirements for DCFS caseworkers and all other DCFS employees who come into contact with at-risk children, their families, or caretakers to include a review of in-service and continuing education requirements, as well as an analysis of whether these requirements are adequate, whether they address the issues that recur in child death cases, and a comparison of DCFS' standards with best practices from other jurisdictions;
2. Review of the availability and quality of services provided to families in which a child has been abused or neglected, such as drug and alcohol treatment,

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domestic violence prevention, anger management, mental health services, parenting classes, etc., to include a review of linguistic availability and cultural appropriateness of these services, as well as the mechanism for how these referrals are made, and the methods by which DCFS assesses whether the services have been effective and the risk of future child abuse or neglect has been reduced;

3. An assessment of whether counseling and treatment services are located where these services are needed. A demographic study would be needed to identify where DCFS-involved children are located, and a breakdown by SPA and language preferences would be needed to make this assessment;

4. An assessment of DCFS' and other involved County departments' awareness of and adherence to protocols in response to crisis situations involving child endangerment cases;

5. A review and accounting of whether a disproportionate number of parents involved in child endangerment and fatality cases have been, or remain, dependent or delinquent minors, and if so, what recommendations can be made to identify potential issues and provide additional preventative services to this population and to include this information in all future child fatality reports to the Board; and

6. As assessment of the effectiveness of DCFS' Quality Assurance/Improvement Section and Risk Management Division and of whether there should be a reconsideration of providing funding in the next fiscal year for additional positions in the Quality Assurance/Improvement Section and Risk Management Division of DCFS.

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The report should also include recommendations for enhancing and improving the quality and availability of services for at-risk children and families and the standards of training for DCFS caseworkers, as well as any funding recommendations associated with such enhancements and improvements.

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